

# PRESS RELEASE

30 April 2025

***NJC directs Imo State Governor to reverse the appointment of the Acting Chief Judge.***

- ***Imo State Acting Chief Judge to show cause within 7 days why disciplinary action should not be taken against him.***
- ***President Customary Court of Appeal, Imo State to show cause within 7 days why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for presiding over the JSC meeting that recommended the appointment of the Acting Chief Judge, contrary to the provision of the Constitution.***
- ***3 serving Judicial Officers including a Justice of Court of Appeal placed on 1-year suspension each without pay***
- ***Council empanelled 9 Committees to investigate 27 Judicial Officers for various allegations of misconducts***
- ***Dismissed 29 petitions***
- ***Issued a letter of caution to a Federal High Court Judge***
- ***Appointment of Judicial Officers henceforth open to public scrutiny.***

At its 108<sup>th</sup> Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, the National Judicial Council, directed the Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma to appoint the Most Senior Judicial Officer in the State High Court's hierarchy as the acting

Chief Judge of the State in conformity with Section 271 (4) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

The National Judicial Council under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Kudirat Motonmori Kekere-Ekun, GCON, at its 108<sup>th</sup> Meeting, also suspended three serving Judicial Officers without pay for one (1) year for various acts of judicial misconduct. It also empanelled nine (9) Committees to investigate pending complaints against 27 Judicial Officers for alleged acts of judicial misconduct.

The Council at its Meeting resolved that the constitutional provision on appointment of an acting Chief Judge of a State does not give room for discretion. Section 271(4) of the Constitution provides:

***“If the office of the Chief Judge of a State is vacant  
or if the person holding the office is for any reason***

*unable to perform the functions of the office, then, until a person has been appointed to and has assumed the functions of that office, or until the person holding the office has resumed those functions, the Governor shall appoint the most senior Judge of the High Court to perform those functions.”*

Council also resolved that Hon. Justice Theophilus Nnamdi Nzeukwu should be issued a query to show cause within seven (7) days why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for presenting himself to be sworn in as the acting Chief Judge of Imo State.

Hon. Justice V. U. Okorie, the President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Imo State, who acted as Interim Chairman of Imo State Judicial Service Commission and recommended the appointment of Hon. Justice Nzeukwu is required to show cause within 7 days why disciplinary

action should not be taken against him for his complicity in the recommendation.

Specifically, in its resolution, the Council suspends Hon. Justice Jane E. Inyang, Court of Appeal, Uyo Division, for one year without pay, as the Investigation Committee found His Lordship to have breached Rule 3 (5) of the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

Hon. Justice Jane E. Inyang was found to have abused his office by issuing inappropriate *Ex parte* Orders for the sale of Hon. Udeme Esset's petrol station and other businesses at interlocutory stage of the case.

The act of judicial misconduct occurred while His Lordship presided over *Suit No. FHC/UY/CS/46/2023*, at the Federal High Court, Uyo Judicial Division, before his elevation to Court of Appeal.

Furthermore, Hon. Justice Inyang Ekwo of the Federal High Court, Abuja Division, has been placed on suspension for

one (1) year without pay. His Lordship was also placed on Watch-List for five (5) years and barred from elevation for five (5) years.

The complaints against Hon. Justice Ekwo arose from ***Charge No. FHC/ABJ/CR/184/2021***, wherein His Lordship delivered a Ruling in a pending application without hearing the parties. His Lordship ignored an application to set aside the proceedings of the Court conducted in the absence of the parties. Subsequently, His Lordship proceeded to deliver a ruling dismissing the Charge against the Defendants. Consequently, His Lordship was found to have violated Rule 3.1 and 3.3 of the 2016 Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Council also suspended Hon. Justice Aminu Baffa Aliyu of the Federal High Court, Zamfara Division for a period of one (1) year without pay for judicial misconduct

in breach of Rule 3 (1) and 5 of the 2016 Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

It also placed His Lordship on the Watch-List for three (3) years within which period he is barred from elevation.

Hon. Justice Baffa was found liable for act of judicial misconduct in *Suit No. FHC/GS/CS/30/2021, the Government of Zamfara State vs EFCC*, wherein His Lordship granted an order restraining security agencies from carrying out their statutory duties, and disregarded the doctrine of stare decisis in adjudication of the case.

The Council also issued a letter of caution to Hon. Justice A. O. Awogboro of Federal High Court, Lagos Division in a petition filed by one Kasali Azeez Olagoke and S. Hamza in *Suit No. FHC/CS/2021* between Chief Adesanya Musediku against Assistant General of Police, Onikan, Zone 2.

The petition against Hon. Justice Othman A. Musa of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory was put in

abeyance pending the outcome of the decision of the Court of Appeal arising from *Suit No. FCT/HS/BW/2274/15*.

The petition against Hon. Justice C. N. Mbonu Nwenyi of the High Court of Anambra State by one Prof. Paul C. Obianaso was discountenanced after investigation revealed that there was no misconduct on the part of His Lordship.

Another petition against Hon. Justice I. E. Ekwo in *Suit No FHC/ABJ/CS/321/2015* was put in abeyance pending the outcome of appeal before the Court of Appeal.

Council discountenanced a petition by Mrs Adaku Amadi against Hon. Justice R. B. Haastrup of the National Industrial Court, as the Petitioner withdrew her complaints.

Council equally considered the report of its Preliminary Complaints Assessment Committee, which contained a total number of forty-three (43) petitions. Nine (9) Committees were empanelled for further investigation of eleven (11) petitions, while twenty-nine (29) petitions were dismissed

for lacking in merit. Three (3) petitions against Hon. Justice Abubakar Babashani of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory; Hon. Justice Isaac Essien of the National Industrial Court; and Hon. Justice A. O. Musa of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory by Henry Chinweike Okoro; Ikemefuna Stephen Nwoye, Esq.; and Lassborn Chichebem Orjiugo, respectively, were put in abeyance pending the decisions of the Court of Appeal.

Council also considered a petition by one Mahmud Aliyu against the appointment of three Judges to the High Court of Zamfara State.

The Petitioner complained that the exercise conducted in 2022 by the Zamfara State Judicial Service Commission which led to the emergence of shortlisted candidates was not transparent and was characterized by nepotism, high handedness and non-compliance with Rules 4, 5 and 6 of the



NJC guidelines for the appointment of Judicial Officers 2014.

That the nominees were unilaterally picked by the Chairman of the Zamfara State Judicial Service Commission (JSC) in disregard to the NJC guidelines on merit-based assessment. Council however, deliberated on its Committee's findings on the petition and resolved that the Petitioner was an interested party who had indicated interest but was not selected as a candidate.

Council noted that the Petitioner's allegations were unsubstantiated and substantially based on falsehood.

It therefore, resolved that the Petitioner who was a candidate for judicial appointment and intentionally peddled falsehood against another aspiring Judicial Officer will be barred from participation in any future exercise.

In a petition to probe the recruitment exercise for the appointment of six (6) Federal High Court Judges in 2021

by one Abdullahi Liman, the Council noted that the petition violated Section 11 (1) of the Judicial Discipline Regulations which stipulated that a complaint must be filed within six (6) months of the occurrence of the event or matter complained of, whereas the Petitioner filed his complaints on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of January, 2025.

It also resolved that a petition on the unconstitutional composition of Oyo State Judicial Service Commission written by Monday Adjeh has been overtaken by events.

The Council also accepted the voluntary retirement of Hon. Justice Babatunde Ahmed Ademola Bakre and approved the notification of change of name of Hon. Justice I. A. Osayande to Hon. Justice I. A. Dika of the Edo State High Court.

Council at the meeting, finally resolved that henceforth, the names of candidates being considered for appointment as

Judicial Officers to Superior Courts of Records will be published for information and comments by the public.

The primary objective of this initiative is to solicit comments from the public where there is objection to the integrity, reputation and/or competence of the candidates by opening the process to public participation and scrutiny.

Kemi Ogedengbe Babalola, Esq  
**Deputy Director, Information**